Relationship between Students' Academic Self-Concept, and their Academic Achievement in English Language in Enugu State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT:

The study investigated the relationship between students' academic self-concept, and their academic achievement in English Language in Enugu state, Nigeria. Three research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The study employed the correlational survey design. The population of the study comprised all the secondary schools in Enugu state. A sample of 800 students which was made up of 400 boys and 400 girls were selected from three Education Zones in Enugu state. The instruments "Academic Self-Concept Questionnaire (ASCQ)" was used for data collection. Data collected for research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Pearson correlation was used to determine the relationship between study variables. Hypotheses were tested by comparing the already established relationship index against the critical values at 0.05 level of significance. The results indicated that there was a significant relationship between self-concept and English language achievement. Based on the findings of the study, implications of the findings were noted. The researcher recommended among others that Orientation and motivational talks, seminars and extramural instructions should be organized for students to help them hold and maintain a good academic self-concept.

Keywords: Academic Self-concept, academic achievement, English Language

INTRODUCTION:

In Nigeria, academic achievement is considered as a criterion to judge one's total potentialities and capacities, hence academic achievement occupies a very important place in education as well as in the learning process. In fact, one of the main objectives of education is to develop the students through providing proper conditions for them so as to reach the highest levels of academic achievement. Though education is not the only road to success in the working world, much effort is made to ascertain, evaluate and track the progress of students in schools. Parents are concerned about their children's academic achievement because they believe that good academic results will make provisions for more career choices and job security. Moreover, schools especially in Enugu Metropolis, are often influenced by the concern about their school's reputation, which can hinge on the overall academic achievement of the school.

It could be said that academic achievement of students determines whether students are considered to be successful in their studies or not. For this reason, it is important to understand which factors are responsible for determining, predicting or causing variance in academic achievement. Dambudzo [1] states that education has become concerned with the physical, social and emotional development of the individual with less attention being given to factors such as

academic self-concept which can contribute to the academic achievement of learners.

Academic achievement refers to the results of intellectual performance in schools and as an education parameter; it is the most important factor for determining success in the school setting. According to Awan [2], academic achievement is defined by examination marks, students' grades and percentiles in academic subjects in school system.

In any school system, academic achievement is the priority of students as well as the teachers. The level of students' success at school has far-reaching implications for students' career choices and after-school lives. Research by authors like McCoach and Siegle [3]; Kornilova, Kornilov and Chumakova [4] suggest that self-concept, especially academic self-concept helps to predict students' academic achievement. They stated that as much as one-third of the variance in achievement can be accounted for by academic self-concept. Trautwein, Lüdtke, Marsh, Köller and Baumert [5] define academic self-concept as a person's self-evaluation regarding a specific academic domain or ability.

Academic self-concept is an evaluative self-perception that is formed through the student's experience and interpretation of the school environment. According to Daramu and Balarabe [6], academic self-concept refers to specific attitudes, feelings and perceptions about an individual's intellectual or academic abilities which represent individual's self-beliefs and self-feelings regarding the academic setting.

According to Cokley, Komarraju, King, Cunningham & Muhammed [7] there are two

differing perspectives of academic self-concept. The first perspective asserts that like general self-concept, academic self-concept is also hierarchical and multi-dimensional based on specific subjects such as English Language Self-concept and Mathematics self-concept [8]. This is so because, important academic outcomes are substantially related to academic self-concept but are relatively unrelated to self-esteem and non-academic component of self-concept [9].

English language is the official language and Lingua Franca of Nigeria, that perhaps, is the reason why parents in Nigeria put a great deal of pressure on their children to succeed in English Language at all levels of education. There is perceived usefulness of English language in one's life. In Nigerian, English is compulsory for all primary and secondary school students in the country. However, in spite of the importance, students continue to perform poorly on the subject in national examinations. Hence, academic self-concept can be defined as students' evaluation of self-perceived personal possession of academic skills, abilities, reasoning ability, enjoyment and interest in the subject matter [10].

Studies have been carried out to determine the direction of the causal relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement. Marsh, Trautwein, Ludtke, Koller and Baumert [11], for example, have suggested that improving students' academic achievement without enhancing their self-concept in the related academic domains is most likely to lead to only short-term gain. This suggestion by Marsh, et al [11] was supported by Liu [12]. According to Liu, students who have less satisfying academic achievement may develop less positive academic confidence, which in the end, may

lead to lower academic self-concept. On the other hand, students with less positive academic self-concept are more likely to lack learning motivation, which may result in poor academic performance.

Liu [12], thus, concluded that academic self-concept and academic achievement tend to affect and determine each other. This conclusion by Liu agrees with the suggestion that academic self-concept is a cause as well as an effect of academic achievement in that, prior academic self-concept influences subsequent academic achievement beyond the effects of prior academic achievement.

Guay, Ratelle, Soy and Litalien [13] in a study found that students who perceived themselves as academically competent obtained higher grades because their academic self-concept led them to be more autonomously motivated at school. In contrast, students with negative perceptions about their academic capabilities, according to Williams and Williams [14], shy away from academic tasks because (a) they view them as personal threats, (b) have low aspirations and weak commitments to task-related goals and (c) dwell on their personal deficiencies and adverse outcomes. Williams and Williams [14] explain that once these beliefs are formed, they affect a student's academic achievement through their influence on choice of activities, the amount of effort applied, the level of persistence, and the kinds of meta-cognitive learning strategies invoked.

Although the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement is well established in the literature, little research work has been done on the topic in Enugu state. This study therefore is intended to make a contribution towards filling this gap. To this end, the current study will examine the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement of secondary school students in Enugu State

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study is to determine the relationship between students' academic self-concept and their academic achievements in Enugu State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Find out the academic self-concept scores of secondary school students in Enugu State.
2. Find out the achievement scores of secondary school students in English Language.
3. Determine the relationship between secondary school students' academic self-concepts and their achievements in English Language.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the academic self-concept scores of secondary school students in Enugu State?
2. What are achievement scores of secondary school students in English Language?
3. What is the relationship between secondary school students' academic self-concepts and their achievement in English Language?

Hypotheses

The following Null hypotheses were tested in the study, at (0.05) level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between secondary school students' academic self-concepts and their achievement in English Language.

Methods

Research Design

The researchers adopted a correlational research design. A correlational design according to Nworgu [15] seeks to establish the relationship that exists between two or more variables. Such studies according to the author usually indicate the direction and magnitude of the relationship between the variables expressed as a correlation coefficient.

Area of the Study

The study was carried out in Enugu State. Enugu State is one of the thirty-six states of Nigeria.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprise of 15,672 students (Source: Post Primary School Service Commission, Enugu, 2015). This comprises all the Senior Secondary 2 (SS 2) students from all the public secondary schools in Enugu State, under the management of the State government. The state has a total number of 291 public secondary schools.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size for the study is 800 students. This was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. Firstly, simple random sampling was used to select three education zones from the six existing education zones in the State. Secondly, simple random sampling was further employed to select 5 schools from each of the selected education zones in the State. Then, disproportionately stratified random sampling technique was used to choose a total of 800 students from the selected secondary schools in the zones. The stratification was done according to school type, such that 400 students were selected from male schools while a total of 400 also

was selected from female schools. This altogether made up the sample size for this study.

Instrument for Data Collection

The following instruments were used for data collection.

Academic self-concept Questionnaire (ASCQ): adapted version of Academic Self-Concept Questionnaire (ASCQ) developed by Liu & Wang [16]

Teachers' Grade Books/ Score Inventory: comprising of the performance grades of the students on Mathematics and English language,

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument "Academic Self-concept Questionnaire (ASCQ)", was subjected to face and content validation. The researcher presented copies of the questionnaires together with purpose of the study, research questions and hypothese to three experts, − two from guidance and counselling and one from measurement and evaluation all of whom are from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The experts made careful scrutiny of the items to ensure their appropriateness and adequacy as well as their relevance, clarity and language expression. The experts' constructive criticism and suggestions for modifying the instruments were affected in an effort to standardize the instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the ASCQ has been established in previous studies in Singapore with cronbach's alpha ranging between 0.71 and 0.89. However, the reliability of the instruments was established for Nigeria settings through

internal consistency estimate. Participants involving 100 students from secondary schools in Anambra State were selected through accidental sampling technique. The instrument was administered to the respondents, collated and scored. The researchers used Cronbach alpha statistical method in determining the reliability coefficients of both instruments. The reliability coefficient of Nigerian Samples yielded 0.96 and 0.91 respectively. This was considered high enough to be used for this study.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected for the research questions 1 was analysed using summated scores. Scores from 20-40 is low self-concept; 41-60 is moderate self-concept, 61-80 is good self-concept.

In determining the participant's scores, the response options were scaled in 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Research question 3 was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r). This was used to determine if a relationship exist between the study variables. Data relating to the null hypotheses 1 was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r). The probability coefficient alpha level for the rejection of the null hypotheses was set at the 0.05 level of significance. These analyses were used to determine if the hypotheses were to be rejected or not rejected. The decision rule was as follows: Where r-calculated > than r-critical, reject hypothesis, otherwise do not reject the null hypothesis. Also, where significant value (P) < 0.05, reject null hypothesis, otherwise do not reject the null hypothesis.

Results and discussion
Research Questions 1

What are the academic self-concepts scores of secondary school students in Enugu State?

Table 1: Range of scores on students' academic self-concepts

Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
20 − 40.00	0	0	-
41.00 − 60.00	155	19.38	Moderate self-concepts
61.00 − 80.00	645	80.62	Good self-concepts

Table 1 shows that 645(80.62%) of the students with the scores ranging from 41.00-60.00 have good self-concepts, while 155(19.38%) of them with scores between 41.00 − 60.00 have moderate self-concepts.

Research Questions 2

What are achievement scores of secondary school students in English Language?

Table 2: Range of achievement scores of students in English language

Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
0 − 39	275	34.38	Poor achievement
40 − 49	75	9.38	Fair achievement
50 − 69	336	42	Good achievement
70 - 100	114	14.24	Very good achievement

Table 2 shows that 336 (42%) of the students with scores ranging from 50 − 69 have good achievement in English language, while 114(14.24%) students who scored between 70 − 100 have very good achievement, 75 (9.38%) other students who scored between

40 – 49 have fair achievement, where 275 (34.38%) of the students have poor achievement in English language.

Table 3: Pearson r on students' self-concept scores and achievement scores in English language

Source of Variation	N	Self-concepts r	Achievements r	remark
Self-concepts	800	1.00	-0.41	Low Negative Relationship
Achievements	800	-0.41	1.00	

Table 3 shows that there is low negative relationship of -0.04 existing between the students' self-concepts and their achievements in English language in secondary schools.

Hypotheses

There is no significant relationship between secondary school students' academic self-concepts and their achievements in English Language.

Table 4: significance of Pearson r on the students' self-concepts and their achievements in English language

N	Cal R.	Df	Crit. R	Remarks
800	0.41	798	0.16	S

N = Significant

Table 9 indicates that at 0.05 level of significance and 798 degree of freedom, the calculated r 0.41 is greater than the critical r 0.16. Therefore, the first null hypothesis is rejected. There is significant relationship between secondary school students' academic self-concepts and their achievements in English Language.

Discussion

The study examined the relationship between students' academic self-concept and their academic achievement in English Language. The study revealed a maximum self-concept score of 136 and minimum self-concept score of 44. Majority of the students had a self-concept of 69. Also, the maximum self-behaviour score of students is 199 with a minimum score of 29. The scores indicated low levels self-concept among the students when compared to the population of those who had high self-concept. A number of factors can be adduced for this finding. Students may not have been exposed to lessons on self-efficacy that could improve achievement, and teaching methods adopted by the teachers may not have enhanced the students' self-concept. This could have contributed to the negligible relationship between self-concept and achievement. This is supported by Nasir and Lin [17] who reported that students who have positive self-concept possesses a higher social and emotional compatibility so they have the potentiality to make better progress. The results of the study revealed a negative significant relationship between self-concept and English language. This contrast the report of Barker, Dowson and McInery [18] that noted that studies have repeatedly shown moderate to strong correlations between academic achievement and academic self-concept. A student with a negative academic self-concept, for example, might just avoid studying hard because he would regard the subject content as too difficult. Since self-concept correlates with self-acceptance which is based largely on cognitive abilities [19], the students' cognitive ability may also have been low. Students'

academic self-concepts are also determined by their perceptions of their academic ability in an area as well as their assessment of their academic standing relative to their classmates [3].

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed a significant relationship between self-concept and achievement in English language but not mathematics. The study also established that self-concept and study behaviour do not significantly correlate achievement. This led to the conclusion that self-concept and the study behaviour are low and correlate differently with achievement. The study therefore establishes that although self-concept correlated with English achievement, self-concept and academic achievement does not significantly correlate achievement.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:
Orientation and motivational talks, seminars and extramural instructions should be organized for students to help them hold and maintain a good academic self-concept.

Limitations of the Study

One major limitation of this study is that of assessing the students' results and getting the students whose results were obtained to respond to the questionnaire. This was especially difficult as some of the students for one reason or the other were not available to attend to the questionnaire and where they were not reachable after several attempts were removed from the study.

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